

GALLAUDET AND HIS **SCHOOL**

*Arranged and put
into dialogue by
J. Schuyler Long*



Silent Worker Print-Shop

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INTRODUCTION



LAST December we wanted to celebrate Gallaudet's birthday by giving a little play. The annual recital of his biography to those already familiar with it, had grown somewhat monotonous and a trifle wearisome. So I looked around for something appropriate and when I found nothing suitable, with Gallaudet as the central figure, I arranged the following dialogue.

We put it on the stage before a meeting of the Mid-West branch of the Gallaudet College Alumni Association, in the chapel of the Omaha school and it proved quite acceptable as a variation. The parts were enacted by pupils from the Iowa school assisted by several from Omaha.

In the hope that it may be found helpful to others under similar circumstances I am placing it before the public thru the columns of the **SILENT WORKER**.

The play as herewith outlined will take from a half to three quarters of an hour for presentation. If desired it can easily be enlarged upon and made to include more detail or more of the later life of Gallaudet.



THOMAS HOPKINS GALLAUDET

With the exception of a few minor points introduced to help along the dialogue, the material embodied in the play is historically accurate.

THE PLAY

SCENE I—Dr. Cogswell's yard at Hartford.

PERSONS—Thomas H. Gallaudet, a young divinity student; Alice Cogswell, a little deaf girl; Dr. Cogswell, her father; several children.

The children run in upon the stage as if from another part of the yard and begin asking each other what they shall play; someone suggests drop-the-handkerchief and they arrange themselves in a circle and begin to play; Alice follows them in, more leisurely and as they form a circle to play she stands at one side and refuses to join the game.

Gallaudet enters, stops to watch them a moment, and seeing Alice, goes over to her and in natural gestures, pointing to her and at the group inquires why she does not play; she shakes her head; he then tries to talk to her and taking off his hat and some paper from his pocket teaches her to write h-a-t and to identify the object.

Dr. Cogswell enters; Alice runs to him and he puts his arm around her, as they approach Gallaudet who turns to meet the doctor.

Gallaudet—Good afternoon, Doctor; I have been much interested in your daughter Alice. I have noticed her several times from our house next door and often wondered whether she could not be sent to school.

Cogswell—God knows I would be glad to send her to school and have her educated if I could. She is very dear to me and I hate to think of her going

thru life without an education. (*Children discontinue play and run out; Alice follows.*)

Gal.—Have you made no effort to put her to school?

Cogs.—Yes; I thought she might be sent to the public schools as she seems bright; but the superintendent tells me it is impossible. People seem to think the deaf can not be taught.

Gal.—I am sure they are wrong; I was able to make Alice understand the word "hat" and she quickly wrote it after me. There is no doubt that she can learn.

Cogs—But they will not take her in the public schools.

Gal.—Are there no schools for the deaf?

Cogs.—None in this country that I know of. A few years ago a man in Virginia by the name of Thomas Bolling tried to start one but was not successful. He had a deaf brother named John who was probably the first deaf pupil in this country.

Gal.—Why did he give it up?

Cogs.—He employed one John Braidwood, a grandson of Thomas Braidwood, of England, who invented a method of teaching the deaf. But young Braidwood took to drink, squandered funds provided for the school and disappeared and the effort to start a school was abandoned.

Gal.—That was unfortunate. Do you know whether there are really many deaf children? One of your profession probably is informed on this subject.

Cogs.—Quite a few, but rather scattered. There are about 84 in Connecticut; maybe 400 in New England and 2,000 in the whole country at this time.

Gal.—That is certainly enough to make it desirable to have schools for them. Think of all those children going thru life without an education, doomed to intellectual darkness! In this enlightened age and in this country it should be different.

Cogs.—I certainly wish we had some provision here for them; I can not send Alice to England. It is too far and too expensive.

Gal.—What about these schools in England?

Cogs.—Rev. Dr. Strong, who has been there tells me that the Braidwood family has established three schools in the United Kingdom and that they have a monopoly of the work.

Gal.—Could not some one be sent to England to study their methods and then come back and start a school over here?

Cogs.—That looks feasible. My friend, Rev. Mr. Strong, is interested in that matter and we might take it up with him and see what can be done. Perhaps we can devise some way.

Gal.—I hope the plan will succeed. I am confident that the education of the deaf is possible if we only know how to go about it. Why not try a private teacher for a while. My friend, Miss Huntley, has had great success with children and might be willing to try to teach Alice. And as I will have some time this winter I would like to see what could be done myself.

Cogs.—I wish you would do so. It will help convince people that educating the deaf is possible. Speak to Miss Huntley and let me know. And as you live next door come in whenever you can and try your experiments.

Gal.—Let us look around and find out whether

there are other deaf children who would be likely to attend the school if one was established.

Cogs.—All right. I will see Mr. Strong and other friends about it.

(*Both retire.*)

SCENE II—Library of Dr. Cogswell in Hartford.

PERSONS—Dr. Cogswell; Thomas Gallaudet; Rev. Mr. Strong and several other gentlemen.

Dr. Cogswell and the others are seated in the room around a table; enter Mr. Gallaudet; Dr. Cogswell rises and meets him and brings him to the table.

Cogswell—Here Mr. Strong, is Mr. Gallaudet, the young man of whom I spoke, and who is so much interested in the education of the deaf. (*Introduces him to the rest of the gentlemen collectively.*)

Strong—We are glad to see him. Be seated, Mr. Gallaudet, and we will proceed with the business for which we are met. Dr. Cogswell will tell these gentlemen what has been interesting us for the past few months?

Cogs.—In asking you here I have already told you in part what the object is and I hope we can devise some means whereby we can start a school for the deaf here in Hartford.

Strong—How about the experiment with Alice?

Cogs.—That has been quite successful. Miss Huntley taught her for a while and young Gallaudet spent considerable time teaching her last winter so that she has acquired many simple words and can express herself in simple sentences. But both Miss Huntley and Gallaudet feel the lack of knowledge of methods necessary. The only way seems

to be to send some one to England to study methods there.

Strong—How would you suggest securing funds to do this, and after the school is started how will it be supported?

Cogswell—I suppose we will have to depend on voluntary subscriptions and on charity to support the school.

Mr. Woolbridge—I believe we can raise the money by subscription. I will head a list with a good sum and by a canvass of prominent citizens we can secure the money.

Strong—Yes, I believe we can.

A member—Are you sure that a school to educate the deaf will be successful?

Strong—Without doubt. There are three such schools in England and I am told that the deaf are even taught to articulate. There is also a school in Paris founded by the Abbe de l'Epee who was the first, I believe, to attempt the education of the deaf. He started a school, and since his death it has been under the Abbe Sicard.

Gal.—My observations have convinced me that the deaf possess normal minds and it is only because of their deafness that they have failed to develop. When we know how to reach them their minds will become awakened.

Cogs.—Yes, that has been amply demonstrated by Gallaudet's success with Alice.

Strong—I think we are all agreed that a school ought to be started and the only way to do it is to send some one to Europe to find out what methods are employed. But whom can we send?

Cogs.—Why not young Gallaudet here? I have al-

ready talked with him about the matter. He has been studying for the ministry but has become very much interested in the deaf and the possibility of their education. We might persuade him to take up this work, for it offers great opportunity to serve the cause of humanity and the work of God. What say you, Gallaudet?

Gal.—Dr. Cogswell and I have had several conversations on the subject and he has urged me to take up this work. Ever since I became interested in Alice and realized that there were many such children who must grow up in ignorance, not even with a knowledge of God, it has left a deep impression on me. Surely these children are entitled to a share in the benefits and the pleasures of life which God has provided for His people, and it seems to me a great wrong that they should be allowed to grow up without an effort to teach them and restore them to society. I am willing therefore to fit myself to undertake this great work, for I believe it is a great work to bring light into minds long dark and to bring these unfortunate children to a knowledge of their Creator.

Cogs.—I think, gentlemen, that there can be no more fortunate choice than young Gallaudet. I propose therefore that we formally select him to take up the work and ask him to go to England as soon as possible and get what knowledge he can there. Are you all agreed?

(All nod assent.)

Cogs.—Very well, then we will set about securing the necessary funds, sufficient to meet his immediate needs and then start preparations for opening the school on his return.

Strong—I think we had better appoint a committee to look after the raising of funds and I suggest Dr. Cogswell and Mr. Woolbridge be appointed to this committee.

Cogs.—If it is your wish I am willing to serve. Will you do so, Mr. Woolbridge?

Woolbridge—Certainly. Let us meet tomorrow and go about the work at once.

(Curtain.)

SCENE III—Braidwood's school in London under Dr. Watson.

PERSONS—Gallaudet, Dr. Watson and Thomas Braidwood.

Dr. Watson seated in his office. Enter Gallaudet.

Gallaudet—Dr. Watson, I believe.

Watson—Yes, I am Dr. Watson. (*Gallaudet hands him his card.*)

Gallaudet—I have come to England from America in the hope of acquiring knowledge of methods in teaching the deaf so that on my return I can start a school for them over there. Can you give me any assistance?

Wat.—I fear not. Mr. Braidwood controls the schools in England and his methods are secret.

Gal.—You say his methods are secret? Does not the government keep the school, or is it supported by charity?

Wat.—No; the government has nothing to do with it. If you desire to secure information you must get Mr. Braidwood's consent.

Gallaudet—May I see Mr. Braidwood?

Wat.—Be seated; I will call him. (*Exit Watson*)
(Enter Watson and Braidwood. Watson introduces Gallaudet.)

Braidwood—Dr. Watson tells me you wish to secure information about our methods of teaching the deaf. I fear we can be of no assistance to you.

Gal.—Yes; I come on a mission to learn methods, being sent by a committee of gentlemen in America interested in establishing a school for the deaf there.

Braidwood.—But we can not divulge our methods. They are our source of income and wealth to us and we can not give them away.

Gal.—But in a matter of this kind it would seem that a spirit of philanthropy would enter into the consideration, and for the sake of humanity you would be willing to render assistance.

Braid.—No, there is no philanthropy about it, we are in the business to make money. As I invented the method and am alone in the knowledge of its use, I do not propose that anyone else shall profit by my genius.

Gal.—But as I am from America and will teach only over there I will not interfere with your work here.

Braid.—That makes no difference.

Gal.—Perhaps you will be willing to give me some assistance for a money consideration.

Braid.—I might do that.

Gal.—What terms would you propose.

Braid.—In the first place you will have to enter the school as a student and remain three years, and pay us the sum of 1000 pounds, and at the end of your term of instruction give bonds promising secrecy of the methods we teach you.

Gal.—It would be impossible for me to remain such a length of time. If the other requirements are met can this time limit be reduced?

Braid.—No; not at all. If you do not care to accept the condition we require, we might as well end the matter. Good day. (*Exit Braidwood.*)

Gallaudet, (*turning to Watson*)—I confess I am rather disappointed. Are there any other schools for the deaf in England?

Wat.—There is one in Scotland, at Edinburg, under Mr. Kinniburgh, but you could get no assistance there as he learned his methods from Braidwood and is under bonds to keep them a secret.

Gal.—I do not understand why there should be secrecy in a matter of this kind. I presume I shall have to return to America and report the failure of my trip.

Wat.—There is a school in Paris, and the Abbe Sicard, the head of the school is now in London, I understand. You might see him.

Gal.—You say he is an abbe, or priest? He will doubtless be more generous. I have heard of his school and of the philanthropic spirit of the late Abbe de l'Epee and doubtless Sicard is like him. How did the Paris school get its start?

Wat.—De l'Epee one time met two sisters who were deaf and being struck by the sadness of their condition and desirous of teaching them of God he made an effort to instruct them, was successful, and thereupon he founded a school for other deaf children in Paris. He invented and used a system of signs which are now used by Sicard and his assistants. However, we consider Braidwood's methods superior.

Gal.—Do you know where I can find Mr. Sicard?

Wat.—You will probably find him at the hotel Royal in London.

Gal.—Thank you; I will look him up. Good day.

(*Exit Gallaudet.*)

SCENE IV—Gallaudet's school-room in Hartford.

PERSONS—Gallaudet, Laurent Clerc, Dr. Cogswell, Mr. Woolbridge and seven pupils.

Pupils are seated at desks, except Alice Cogswell, who stands before a blackboard with Gallaudet instructing her from sentences on the board. Clerc is busy going from desk to desk to correct pupils' slates. New pupils may enter from time to time.

(Enter Dr. Cogswell and Mr. Woolbridge. Gallaudet sends Alice to her desk and goes to meet them.)

Cogswell—Good day, Gallaudet; how are things going?

Gal.—Very well. We now have seven pupils and I have applications for more. That girl over there entered yesterday. Her name is Sophia Fowler. (*They all turn toward the class; Gallaudet beckons to Clerc who comes forward.*) Here, doctor, is Mr. Laurent Clerc whom I induced to leave France and come to America with me. (*Introduces him also to Mr. Woolbridge—they nod to him and Clerc retires to his work.*)

Cogs.—Mr. Clerc is a deaf-mute, I believe?

Gal.—Yes. He was a pupil in the Paris institution and after his graduation became one of Sicard's assistants. He has had the benefit of the teaching himself and has also had experience as a teacher, so I consider we are fortunate in securing him.

Cogs.—How about his knowledge of English?

Gal.—As soon as he had accepted my offer to come to America, I began instructing him in English and he gave me lessons in signs. This we

continued on the voyage home and have kept it up since returning home. He has sufficient knowledge of English to teach these beginners and is learning more every day. Won't you look around at some of the work?

(They walk between desks and observe work, conversation is resumed from time to time.)

Cogs.—Are the French methods the same as those used in England?

Gal.—No, as I wrote you from London I was unable to secure any assistance in England but fortunately met Mr. Sicard in London, and he invited me to visit his school in Paris and offered me every facility for acquiring his methods.

Cogs.—Did you see any of the work in England?

Gal.—No. Braidwood who has a monopoly of the work there carefully guarded his secrets and allowed no one to see his work. I went to Edinburgh, but met with no better success. I am told that the English use an alphabet made with both hands instead of a single hand alphabet and the signs which de l'Epee invented.

Cogs.—It seems a little strange to use French methods in teaching; it would seem more natural to use English ways.

Gal.—It is easy to apply the methods to English. The signs express ideas rather than words and there is no grammar to observe.

Woolbridge—Did you remain in Paris all the time during your stay abroad?

Gal.—Yes; the French were very cordial to me. I met many of the American colony there and occasionally was called upon to preach. At the Institution I remained a close student in order to

master the methods as soon as possible and was thus enabled to accomplish my desire in less than a year.

Woolbridge—How many pupils do you expect to have this year?

Gal.—Judging from the applications I think we will have about forty.

Cogs.—Have you room to accomodate that many?

Gal.—We will be rather cramped unless more room is provided, and we will certainly need more help in teaching. Pupils are coming from all over New England.

Cogs.—In that case you will probably have to make provision for receiving pupils from all over the country.

Woolbridge—Then the government should be asked to give assistance. It will not do to depend entirely on charity, or voluntary contributions.

Gal.—The tour we made during the first few months interested many people and obtained many contributions, but we cannot count on that as a permanent source of revenue if the school keeps on increasing as it promises to do.

Cogs.—True. Why not try to interest Congress in the matter and secure an appropriation?

Gal.—Why not? The school here will probably be large enough to meet the needs of the country for many years to come and it should be made a national school. There is no reason it should not receive the same recognition as the public schools.

Woolbridge—But how can we make Congress think so?

Gal.—By convincing them that the education of the deaf is possible and a public duty. We could

take a class of young pupils before Congress and show them. Seeing will be believing.

Cogs.—I believe that is the only way. We will consider the matter. It will be best to wait a few months until the pupils have sufficiently advanced.

Woolbridge—The work here is indeed interesting. You have undertaken a very important work which marks the beginning of a great future for all those who are deaf.

Gal.—I realize that we are engaged in work of great moment. But it will be no easy task to make people believe. We must overcome the prejudice of ages, but we will eventually succeed in showing that the deaf are capable of being taught and of becoming useful citizens instead of a burden to the state as formerly.

(Cogswell and Woolbridge prepare to go.)

Gal.—Just a moment, gentlemen. It is time to dismiss, and if you will accompany me after they are gone I will show you the arrangements we have made to take care of the children. *(Gallaudet then tells the pupils it is time for dinner and dismisses them. He then retires with the visitors.)*

(Reprinted from the Silent Worker)



LAURENT CLERC

